



"Von dorthier kam das Stöhnen."
PARSIFAL, act iii.

The Meister.

VOL. VI.

NOVEMBER 25, 1893.

NO. 24.

Wagner's Letters from Paris, 1841.

IV.

July 6, 1841.

THEY HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO SLAY IT, OUR DEAR, OUR GLORIOUS FREISCHÜTZ! They have done to it the worst the beautiful Parisian laws demanded; they have stuffed it with ennui, and left it with all its "want of logic"; in fact—to put the thing briefly *this time*—they have played all the pranks which I lately reported in full to the readers of the "*Abendzeitung*"*: and yet *they have been unable to kill it!* One.

* It will be remembered that the present series of letters appeared in the above-named journal; to it our author had also sent the original of an article, "*Le Freischütz*," which has been reprinted in the *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. I. From

gives it from time to time ; the house begins to get crowded ; the public grows warmer and warmer, and cries "*bis !*" wherever good manners permit.

At first I could not quite make up my mind as to which I was to admire the most for this—the Parisian public, or the *Freischütz* itself. I was even beginning to think I must ascribe it to the performance having become more tolerable ; but no, it was not so : every one dreamed, whined, and shivered as before, —the same abominations with the "Wolf's gulch," the same unselfish joviality of Caspar's. At last the thing grew clear to me ; and now I can assure my fellow-countrymen that in this matter, too, the *Freischütz* deserves more admiration than the Paris public.

Nevertheless, it speaks volumes for the powers of endurance and the marvellous elasticity of this public, that, after the terrible *dégoût* which the first performances must have brought it, it has had the courage to assemble itself again on the red velvet benches of the Opéra, with the determination to hear the *Freischütz* once more from beginning to end. In such circumstances, too, the work itself was bound to make its way at last : under all the wearisome trappings, it was bound to step at last before them in all its native freshness, youth, and glory.—Yet stay ! I am going too fast :—in its *native* freshness, youth and glory, it certainly could not shew itself to them ; the thing we Germans love so

the latter I may quote the following : "In general, one must take it for granted, that the whole *personnel* of the Paris Grand Opéra was *dreaming* on this occasion : for that, my unlucky article [contributed to the *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*] must bear the blame, since I had prepared the public for woods and dreamery. It seemed to myself that the authorities had taken my hint to heart with a terrible punctiliousness ;—as for the woods, the scene-painters of course had not spared their hand, so that nothing remained for the singers, but to devote their mind to the dreaming. Beyond this, they whined a good deal, and *Samiel* even shivered. This shivering of *Samiel*'s was the point where all my scruples broke down, and resolved themselves into a hearty good humour." This passage I merely quote in explanation of the second paragraph of the text above ; but the wit of the thing is so spoilt by removal from its context, that I must try to give the whole article in the next number of *The Meister*.—Tr.

dearly in it, this could never and never speak in the same way to the hearts of the Parisians,—that is past all possibility; the Paris decorum forbids. On the other hand, the French seize points of beauty which almost escape ourselves in a performance of *Der Freischütz*, or at least, which we accept with the placid contentment of custom. I am now speaking of the purely musical beauties of *Der Freischütz*, of the many wonderful effects that strike the French as something entirely new, in view of the unpretentious means employed, and which they understand to honour with unaffected enthusiasm. You can never imagine the rapture with which the Paris public receives the beautiful B-major section of the last Finale, notwithstanding that to them the whole protracted close, with its eminently venerable Hermit, is an atrocity. The few bars where all the solo-voices join forces in this section, produce so enthralling an impression here, that I must say it to the honour of the Parisians: I have never yet heard even the most ravishing cadence of Rubini demanded *da capo* with a like enthusiasm, in spite of Berlioz having implored the public, in the "*Journal des Débats*," to keep silence after this section, so as not to drown the passage where the Hermit makes such a lovely modulation to C-major. My God! what do the Frenchmen care for a Hermit, even when he modulates into C-major?—

In this happy turn which the *Freischütz*' success has taken here, against all expectation, there can be no doubt that the immense *renommée* of the German masterwork has had the largest part to play. Woe to the *Freischütz*, if it had been the product of an unknown composer, and had for the first time been put on the boards in Paris *so!* Both it and its creator would have been lost beyond all rescue, and no musical-biographic lexicon in the wide world would ever have recorded the composer's name. The "*Charivari*" would simply have reported on the event in the same terms as it did about the reception of the *Benvenuto Cellini* of Berlioz: "the public went to sleep, and awoke hissing." A neat-turned quip—and, to the grave for all eternity!—In this case, however, things were bound to go differently; and one should add,

that the public must at least have arrived at a confused inkling of the mystic splendour of the *Freischütz*: an inkling which gave it no peace, the day after a production which had gone so much against its taste, and finally awoke an inexplicable longing to hear the *Freischütz* again on the morrow. More than that, as I have already said, was not required,—the “*Freischütz*” itself was bound to do the rest. *It has done it*; one goes in crowds, one claps and cheers,—*oh, glorious Freischütz that thou art!* People are even talking of *generosity* to be shewn to the heirs of the German master. We shall see!*

But we have also had a *German* ballet; it is played, or rather, danced, in Silesia, not far from Breslau, and a *German poet*, Heinrich Heine, gave the idea for it. This is founded on the saga of the *Willi's*, those brides who have died with their longings of love unstilled, and now get out of their graves at midnight, to dance to death any man they may happen to meet. What peculiarly pleased the French, in this fantastic saga, was its eminent adaptability for a ballet; and indeed, what untold opportunities for the most indelible pirouettes, the most supernatural entrechats, does not this uncanny liking of the *Willi's* afford? For the matter of that, the adapter has done quite right to give the dance-murder a shade of probability by laying its scene in the neighbourhood of Breslau, instead of Paris; for only on the supposition that they are Germans, or in fact Silesians, can the French account for these victims of the dancing mania. Any onlooker at a Parisian masked-ball has ample occasion to convince himself, that it is a physical impossibility for a Frenchman to dance himself to death. The character, the habits, and the qualities of the French make many

* It appears by Wagner's letter to Ferdinand Heine (“*Letters to Uhlig &c.*”) of Jan. 18, 1842, that nothing came of this, despite *his own* exertions.—Will some of his personal revilers remember, that the time referred to in that letter was the time of Richard Wagner's direst Paris poverty?—I will cite one passage, as bearing on the general question of the performances: “The fourth to the ninth representations were those that enlisted the sympathy of the public here: *after* these, the performances became VILLAINOUS, and were, moreover, but few in number. For that reason I anxiously awaited *then* [i.e. in the “first month”] for a letter” &c.—TR.

things rightdown unthinkable and incomprehensible to them, especially in the realm of poetry ; so that the poets of operas and ballets often see themselves induced to borrow their wonders from abroad, whereby they not only gain the feasibility of a thousand strange conjunctures, but the extra advantage of being able to claim from the public an unconditional faith. Provided the outlandish wonder—which is now astoundingly in fashion—is imported under an outlandish name, there remains nothing else to wish : against the "*Franc-tireur*" the French would have had all kinds of objections to raise, but they are thoroughly contented with "*Le Freischütz*" ; for them it is and remains, in the strict sense of the word, a Bohemian village. "*Les Willis*," then, are also quite to their mind ; what on earth should they quarrel at, about them ? They actually *find* male beings whom they can dance to death ; so one acquires the belief that there really are such abnormally and inadequately constituted sons of Adam,—little as one may be able to form a mental picture of them. "What strange folk they must be, in Silesia, Thuringia, and the adjoining countries !" —We Germans need no "*Willi's*,"—one solitary Ball at the Paris Grand Opéra is quite sufficient to deliver us into the arms of the Dancing Death.—

For the rest, this ballet is much the same as all the others ; one dances well, one has lovely scenery and costumes, one makes spruce music. The latter has been made, in the present instance, by Herr *Adam*, the man who created the "*Postillon*" and the "*Conditteur*" ; this creator has worked himself out with scandalous rapidity ; he has composed himself to death in almost as brief a time as the *Willi's* victims danced there. *His* case the French are quite at home with ; wellnigh each month they see a composer succumb to his own music, and they are always ready to help carry him to his grave. Now and then they learn thereafter, that the deceased and his music are still doing business in Germany ; so that one must not be surprised, if they take that country for the land of ghosts and goblins !

Herr *Adam*, however, is still spooking round and about Paris ;

as every month goes by, one is on the point of having clean forgotten him, when he presents himself once more. With the "Willi's," too, he only put in an appearance on the eve of starting on his journeys; for he is always in the act of starting off, to-morrow or the next day, for Petersburg, Berlin or Constantinople, just to dash off a little ballet for a trifle of 100,000 francs! The uncanny spook!—

Recently, also, a learned young Alsatian artist, Herr *Kastner* by name, made his début at the Opéra Comique. Hitherto mostly known—at least in Paris—as a talented theorist, he sought an opportunity of shewing himself as a dramatic composer; an opportunity not so extremely hard to find, in view of his exceptionally favourable family-connexions. In the abominable state of affairs prevailing at the Paris theatres, however, he was fairly compelled to accept the first textbook the management of the Opéra Comique put into his hands. As to any free choice, any friendly discussion with a poet, such a thing was not to be thought of, if only for the reason that there is no choice, and no poet, in Paris; moreover the Directors are so accustomed to looking merely to the mechanical department of their business, that they would never comprehend what one meant by choice or friendly discussion with a poet, even though it were possible to meet with both these things. Well, Herr Kastner was given so miserable and worthless a book, that he seems not to have known which end to begin at, and so he took to writing a collection of fugues; at least the public avers that it heard nothing but fugues, from beginning to end of the performance of the "*Maschera*." This didn't at all suit the easy-going habitués of the Opéra Comique; they protested that it was against the terms of their subscription, and that they had by no means undertaken to hear Händel. For my own part, this music seemed to contain many a good thing, only I think that Herr Kastner should be advised to abstain from dramatic music for the future, and devote himself to a genre more fitted to the somewhat passionless inflexibility of his musical acquirements. In this placid rigour Herr Kastner is a notable exception, among the hordes of composers who at present people Paris.

In the same theatre, a short while since, there was given a quite bonny little novelty, "the Two Thieves," with music by Herr *Girard*, conductor of the Opéra Comique orchestra. In this opera one steals, with much elegance and plausibility, a handful of diamonds and a gold watch. The trifle, you see, is important enough, especially as the stealing was carried out with such an appearance of truth that everyone involuntarily fumbled for his own diamonds and watch; I was the exception.—

But what are all these trifles, compared with the dire calamity that now has fallen on Paris for aye!—Not the dead season, not the departure of every political notability, not the puns of Herr Sauzet, not the untold price of beef and veal, not the horrible deficit in the State-accounts, not the terrible tax for the fortifications, not the outlook on a coming revolution,—nothing of all these! Quite an other huge misfortune it is, that empties the fashionable quarters at one blow, that turns the Faubourg du Roule and the Faubourg St Germain into hamlets, that lets the grass grow on the pavements of the Chaussée d'Antin, and makes their *hôtels* into dwellings for the bat and screech-owl! Those dazzling *hôtels*—ah! how I pity them! Their velveteed and perfumed erst inhabitants—how I bewail them! for—RUBINI will never come back again! With wreathed smiles and pleasant speeches, the lofty man will pay a visit full of blessing to his friends in fiery Spain and frosty, not to say freezing Russia; and then he will pass across Berlin to his forefathers in Italy. But, for all this journey, as just said, he will never come to Paris more. The prostration here is universal:—the cobbler throws away his awl, the tailor his needle, the dressmaker breaks up her shapes, the perfumer gives his odours to the winds of heaven; to Lyon no more orders go for silks, to Lille one writes no more for ribbons. For alas! the tender guests of the Italian Opera will now wear garments made of hair, and no more silken; in place of ribbons, they will bind a hempen cord around their waist; instead of perfumes, they will strew ashes on their head, and in lieu of satin shoes, be shod with toilsome sandals,—for *Rubini*, RUBINI for whom all these were worn,—

Rubini comes not back.—I fail to understand Louis Philippe ; there *must* be a revolution going on ! You surely will not tell me, that he had not the power to keep Rubini ?

Tout s'en va !—The case is desperate.— —

In Germany too—so I read—one has sad reports from Paris. People are writing a great deal about a painful affair which has occurred here to the poet *Heinrich Heine* ; it appears that they are uncommonly delighted with the incident, and consider they have every right to be ; for they pretty plainly express their conviction that Heine deserves no better than just the treatment he has lately undergone here.—

One must admit, we Germans are a generous folk ! We see arising in our midst a talent beside which we have little else to set ; we rejoice at its fresh and crisp unfolding,—we cry it “ triumph ” and “ vivat,” as it wakes our younger intellects from an utter lethargy, and offers up the fulness of its powers to break a path and point our literature’s yet unborn forces towards a new, unknown, but necessary goal. Whoever among our younger men takes up a pen into his hand, be it well or ill, be it consciously or unconsciously, he seeks to copy *Heine* ; for never has so sudden, so lightning-swift, so entirely unawaited a phenomenon pursued its path so irresistibly, as this of Heine’s its. Yet not enough, that we have quietly looked on, while our police were hunting this glorious talent from its country’s soil ; that, with speedily relaxed attention, we overlook the fact that its spreading roots are torn from that earth which alone could give them nurture ; that we consequently remark with a sleepy yawn, that friend *Heine* has unlearned in Paris his art of “ *Reisebilder* ”-writing ; that through our indifference we finally disgust him with himself, and compel him to cease being a German, albeit he can never become a Parisian ;—not enough, that we cut the ground from under his feet so far, that there remains nothing for his teeming powers but to exercise his wit upon the Ridiculous of what one haply leaves him without wishing it ;—not enough, that we look on *indifferently* and pettily at the maiming of a talent which, with happier tending,

would have reached up to the greatest names in all our literature;—no! we clap our hands for very *joy*, because this Heine at last has met a treatment such as we have the custom, at home, of practising upon our penny-a-liners! But in Germany one does this with so impatient a greed of contumely, that one doesn't even find time to investigate the facts of a sad affair which one is so eager to regard as a merited chastisement. The unwarranted reporter in the "*Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung*"—as I can vouch for—has taken the circumstances, and in fact the whole account of the scene, from the mere statements of the assailant; a precipitance which he tries to justify, in vain, by reading Heine a moral lesson as charming as appropriate.* To no one has it occurred, to likewise hear the statements of *Heine* himself, about an affair which absolutely took place without a competent witness. I therefore appeal to my countrymen's sense of justice, and ask if it is not scandalous, upon the mere statement of *one* party, to mercilessly condemn the other?

Heine, at the present moment, is at a watering-place in the Pyrenees, and lies sick to death. If in truth he had not the courage to revenge a real and shameful insult put upon him, then we must *deplore* the fact; but none of us has the right to *revile* him for it, except it be the officers of our army and the messes of our universities; Heine, however, has nothing to do with either.—So much is certain: the French, who at any rate would have known better how to *keep* their poet, would also have known better how to behave themselves in similar circumstances, notwithstanding that they have plenty of witty fellows who would have felt bound to draw the matter for a passing jest from such a

* The reference is to an unsigned article, dated "from Paris, June 17," and appearing in the issue for June 23, 1841, of the journal named. The statement was to the effect that one of the persons mentioned by Heine in his book, "*H. Heine über Ludwig Börne*," had given its author what we should call a "horse-whipping" in the streets of Paris, on the 14th of that month, and that Heine, practically speaking, had run away. It is not worth while now, except for a biographer of Heine, to attempt to find out the truth of the report, but the "moral lesson" was certainly pretty strongly put by the reporter.—Tr.

scandal. *Defamed* their poet, however, they would never have; especially without even hearing his side of the tale. I have no reason for being passionately fond of the French; but *here* I take them as a pattern.

RICHARD WAGNER.

Recent Wagner=Literature: French.

LITTLE did the author of those "Letters from Paris, 1841" dream that himself and his works would be the subject of a considerable body of French literature before the century was out; little did he dare to hope it in 1861, when *Tannhäuser* was jockeyed out of the opera-house by the Jockey Club; little did he expect it, when a few French adherents assembled at Bayreuth in 1876, to hear the *Ring des Nibelungen*. Never has the wisdom of the French proverb about "*l'imprévu*" been more signally proved than in the present instance. There had been a few minor essays, such as that by Baudelaire, in the middle of this half-century of evolution, and a running fire of similar kind, more or less ever since; but it is only within the last few years, that the books written in France about Richard Wagner have assumed a real and serious importance.

This is only in keeping with the unique position taken by France in respect of the whole Wagner "question." For years the name of Wagner had been taboo at their national opera-house, while a larger and yet larger flock of Frenchmen was thronging to the Festivals at Bayreuth. At last this body of pilgrims turned the scale of public opinion in Paris, and made possible, two years ago, the phenomenal success of *Lohengrin*. This work won ever more adherents to the cause, and any person who attended the performances at Bayreuth last year must have been astounded at the number of Gallic faces on the theatre-hill. Again a work of Wagner's was produced in Paris,—this time a more advanced

creation, to meet the views of a more thoroughly leavened public; with the result that the *Walküre* has been given week after week in Paris, and two or three times a-week; moreover, to receipts such as had never been taken in the house before. I do not know from personal experience, how the work has been rendered there, and the accounts of visitors differ somewhat widely as to the faithfulness of the reproduction; but one thing remains, namely that in no city in the world has any single work of Wagner's been repeated anything near so frequently within so short a period. To those English critics who are never tired of ascribing the present success of Wagner's music in London to what they are pleased to call "the German element in the audience," these Paris accounts must prove most unpleasant reading; for we are surely not going to be told that the ordinary audiences in *all* the chief cities of Europe consist mainly of "the German element." Let them bury *that* hatchet at least, for its edge is now completely turned, and even its handle is worm-eaten; we Wagnerians prefer to fight with foes who at all events are properly armed.

To return to my subject, with an apology for the irresistible crow.—This increasing popularity of Wagner's music in France has further encouraged a quite respectable array of literary authors to come forward with works of more or less value. And here, again, France has a unique record to present. In other countries, not excepting Germany, the quantity of writings about Wagner has been infinitely greater than their quality; in France the works of more value considerably outweigh those of less. With the exception of Wolzogen's *Leitmotiven*-books and one or two biographical pamphlets by the same author; of Glasenapp's, Pohl's, and Tappert's lives of Wagner; of H. S. Chamberlain's "*Das Drama Richard Wagner's*," and, in parts, of Dr Hugo Dinger's "*Richard Wagner's geistige Entwicklung*" (as yet incomplete)—with these exceptions, the mass of modern German literature dealing with the Bayreuth master is vanity and vexation of the spirit. In England we have practically *none*, at least worth honouring by the name of "literature," with the solitary exception of E.

Dannreuther's encyclopædic article in Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*; on the other hand, we have our fair share of writers of all grades who have reiterated *ad nauseam* the same old facts and fancies, with varying accuracy. In America—well, I must reserve that point for a companion article. Spain and Italy have to share one excellent book between them, written by Señor Marsillach Lleonart, and translated, with notes and appendices, by Signor Filippo Filippi; for the rest, there prevails much silence in those countries,—not, perhaps, an unmixed evil. But in France there is growing up quite a school of authors who have come under the influence of Wagner's thought, and are now beginning to enrich the world of literature with really readable and well reasoned works upon the subject. It is a singular fact, however,—and one of which we English may feel proud—that the stimulus to most of the latter-day French Wagner-literature was supplied by an Englishman, writing in French in the now defunct *Revue Wagnérienne*. Those early essays of Houston S. Chamberlain (1885-8, but since expanded into the German work cited above) can be traced in almost all the books which now are crowding from the press of the Libraire Fischbacher in Paris.

Before referring in detail to one or two of these, I must go back to a work which I consider to be the gem, and at the same time the capstone, of the earlier period: Catulle Mendés' "*Richard Wagner*" (G. Charpentier & Co. Paris, 1886).—Can one conceive an English novelist, of M. Mendés' reputation, condescending to write a book about a "musician"? No, we leave all that sort of thing to the musical critics, to make the best they can of; while on the other hand we are inundated by a flood of fugitive essays compiled by people who seem to consider *Parsifal*, more especially, a good penwiper for their callow quills.—M. Mendés' book dealt with one of the two most popular aspects of its subject, from a literary point of view,—the dramatic and the biographic. Of these two he chose the dramatic, and whatever could be done with the purely narrative method of treatment, he has done for those dramas; and done in a way

which it would be a pure work of supererogation for any French author to repeat. Vivid pictures are given of each work, from the standpoint of the spectator, and with an eye for touches that seem to transplant one into the midst of the action at one stroke. Not very much beyond this, did Mons. Mendés attempt to go; though his prefatory remarks and introductions to each drama contain many an admirable idea. I will merely cite the following pair of passages:—"Lorsqu'on est assis dans une stalle pour assister à une représentation de *Lohengrin* ou de *Tristan et Iseult*, il ne faut pas se demander: 'Entendrai-je de belles mélodies,' ou 'Entendrai-je de beaux vers?' Il faut se dire: 'On va représenter devant moi un drame. Serai-je ému?'" Again, of the *Ring*: "La vaste épopée de Richard Wagner offre ceci de frappant, qu'elle peut intéresser les âmes les plus simples et faire penser les plus hauts esprits; elle est naïve, presque puérile parfois; voyez mieux: elle est profonde, et vous aurez peine à la suivre dans les abîmes de rêve où elle vous entraîne. C'est que le poète-musicien, tout en se conformant à la lettre des mythes primitifs, excelle à en démêler, à en révéler les symboles." Be it remembered that these lines were written by one of those who took the direst offence at the unfortunate "*Eine Kapitulation*."

Passing from Catulle Mendés' refined brochure, one comes next to the as yet uncompleted series by Maurice Kufferath; for, though Mons. Kufferath is a Belgian, his works are published by the Libraire Fischbacher in Paris. This writer may be said to belong to the transitional period of French Wagnerian literature. He goes somewhat deeper than Mendés, but he lacks something of his charm of style. His "*Parsifal*" is doubtless known to most of my readers, and they probably will agree with me that its first section, devoted to the "Légende," is the best part of the book, especially in view of its delightful quotations from Chrétien de Troyes; the "Drame" (the second section) is readable, but not very original; while the third section, the "Musique" is too direct an appropriation—acknowledged, certainly—from Hans von Wolzogen. The only other of Kufferath's books which I

have seen, is his "*La Walkyrie*" (published by the same house). This is a second edition, the first having appeared in 1887. Whether this new edition is an alteration or not, I cannot say; but in it the author refers once or twice to Mr H. S. Chamberlain, and there are a few traces of the latter gentleman's good influence. It is not to that quarter, however, that one should attribute Mons. Kufferath's suggestion that, in the second Act of the *Walküre* Wagner would have done better to compress the scenes between Wotan and Fricka and Wotan and Brünnhilde into one "scène à trois"!—In this little book one has too much of "Avec quel charme le violoncelle solo exprime le sentiment!" &c., and "WOTAN . . . portant le casque d'or, l'armure étincelante . . . et FRICKA, la compagne du Jupiter scandinave, la déesse aux sages conseils" &c. savours somewhat of the wad; but the musical analysis is clear and excellent, and many of the slightly over-erudite references to old Scandinavian and Teutonic lore are most valuable to the student—particularly the note (p. 40) where the "Waberlohe" is traced to a natural phenomenon visible among the Taunus mountains.—I don't think that any of Mons. Kufferath's books will exactly set the Seine on fire, but they will certainly serve a very good purpose by supplying the average Wagnerian with useful information about the dramas and their music.

A work of a very different, and to my mind a far superior order, is Mons. Georges Noufflard's "*Wagner d'après lui-même*" (2 vols. 3f. 50 each, Librairie Fischbacher). The first volume of this quite exceptional treatise appeared in 1885, and was reprinted in 1891; the second volume came out only a few months ago. In the interval Mons. Noufflard's cast of thought seems to have taken a very marked development, and seeing how frequently he refers to Mr Chamberlain in his second volume, it will perhaps not offend him if I say that the last-named gentleman has again played the part of the good fairy.—Those *Revue Wagnérienne* articles of his appear to have given quite an invigorating stimulus to French *appréciation* of Wagner, all round; and to avoid a wearisome

repetition of this statement, I may say at once that the works of Mons. Freson and Mons. Hébert, at which I presently shall glance, also acknowledge indebtedness to this gentleman.—The second volume of Mons. Noufflard's work forms an era in Wagnerian literature, not only French, but of any nation you choose to name. It is a typical example of the books that belong by right to the 'nineties' of this century. Not that his first volume was by any means an unimportant effort—for its style is lucid and engaging, and its matter contains many a germ that has blossomed into fruit in the newer allotment; but the interval between the two appears to have been devoted by the author to the most searching investigation of the hidden springs of Richard Wagner's thought, of those open secrets which lay only waiting for the right man to pass their way and give them voice.

In his first volume Mons. Noufflard had recourse to the most obvious sources of information as to Wagner and his life-work, namely the "Autobiographic Sketch," and the "Communication to my Friends," together with C. F. Glasenapp's excellent "Life," and so forth; from these materials he constructed a book which carries one on as smoothly as though it were mounted with india-rubber tyres, and only makes one regret that the driver has at last to cry a halt—at the close of the volume. The author here displays all the Frenchman's art of interspersing with his recital an apt ejaculation of his own: those feather-touches which one has to borrow a French name for, and call them "*spirituel*." Thus on page 42 we have a charming little fancy: the author is talking of the Bayreuth master's grandfather, Gottlob Wagner, the gate-clerk of Leipzig town, and his duties of asking each person who arrived, the time-honoured questions "*Unde? Quis? Quid? et Cur?*" and adds "it would never have done for Lohengrin to present himself at that gate there. On his refusal, grandfather Wagner would infallibly have cried, *Halte là! On ne passe pas!*" A heavier hand would have made the little jest a mere piece of buffoonery.

But you must not carry away the impression that whenever the author puts in what I may call a *personal* appearance, in this

first volume, it is merely with a quip. One has only to go forward a few pages, to find him defending Wagner for the discrepancy between his earlier (1834-6) and his later views of art, by the following remark: "To anyone who gives himself the trouble of thinking, it is obvious that one has no right to confront a man with the ideas he had when he was young. To grow old and suffer would be truly atrocious ills, if they did not bring in compensation a certain moral and intellectual development;" and again, (p. 122) "Human thought, when its movements are on a grand scale, does not go straight from one point to another. It is like the sea, whose rising tide has many a vacillation before it takes final possession of the land it is to cover." There may be nothing strictly new in such comments, but their application to Wagner had theretofore been strangely neglected. A mere citation, however, deprives such passages of their vitality, for Mons. Noufflard has mastered the art of so connecting one thought with the next, that to remove it from its context is much like holding up for admiration one note out of a whole melody. I must make one further quotation from this volume, however, as it shows that the author understands Wagner the musician in as high a degree as Wagner the thinker; it occurs on page 209 and runs thus: "The instrumental passage which follows on Elisabeth's Prayer is the culminating point attained by *Tannhäuser*, and the point from which *Lohengrin* will take its departure."

However, as I hinted above, it is Mons. Noufflard's second volume that places him almost alone among writers about Wagner. Practically, nearly 200 pages out of the 316 are devoted to the intellectual side of the *Ring des Nibelungen*, which is approached in the only way in which that gigantic work should be approached—for purposes of *dramatic* analysis,—namely through Wagner's literary works of the years 1848 to 1851. Here we have, among others, an exposition of *Opera and Drama* which I cannot do better than advise any reader who may have lost patience with my own translation of that work, to study with the greatest care; it is lucid, logical, impartial, and full of original ideas, as a modern

criticism should be. Nor does Noufflard slavishly agree with the *letter* of what Wagner has said in that work; for instance we find this passage on page 169: "For my own part, I think that in *Opera and Drama* the master has exaggerated the directly 'affective' properties of language [i.e. of alliteration], and has attributed to it an *artistic* value greater than really belongs thereto." But this is immediately followed by the corrective: "Nevertheless, then, as ever, for Wagner the principal thing, the thing unique, was the drama itself; and the different methods of expression had importance for him, only in the measure claimed by the subject immediately before his eyes."—But the chief value of this part of the book consists in its masterly exhibition of the *manner* in which the original "Siegfried" drama, with all its optimism, was gradually invaded by the "Wotan" drama with its lesson of renunciation. This process of evolution is traced out step by step, and always by following the clue afforded in Wagner's own prose-writings or correspondence. I have no hesitation in saying that this particular section of "*Wagner d'après lui-même*" is the finest piece of sustained dramatic criticism I have had the good fortune to come across.

Mons. Noufflard's work ends, at present, with an admirable review of *Tristan und Isolde*; but I gather, from its close, that a third volume will be written later. It will be looked forward to with the greatest interest, for this author owns a charm of style too seldom met with nowadays, even in French literature; and, apart from a couple of misprinted dates and a brace of misquoted names (Vol. i, 113, 200, and Vol. ii, 207, 302), there are no inaccuracies of technique. One may not agree with *all* Mons. Noufflard's opinions, but one feels instinctively that he is a man with whom one could argue without having to lose one's temper, as would certainly be the case with many not only of Wagner's enemies, but of his admirers too.

I must close this article with a brief reference to two other works from the same publishing house. The first of these is Mons. J. G. Freson's "*L'Esthétique de Richard Wagner*,"—also

in two volumes. This book is not to be compared with Noufflard's, despite its pretentious title, and its still more ambitious sub-title "*Essais de Philosophie de l'Art.*" It would appear to be the work of a somewhat young man, seeing that on two or three occasions a self-conscious appeal is made, in a footnote, to the authority of Littré's dictionary, to support a "néologisme" or a point of spelling. But the author's style lacks all the energy of youth, without being compensated by the repose of age. I find that in this book I have noted as many passages to attack, as in that of Noufflard I had noted to uphold, i.e. about twenty times as many as I have had space to mention. Of wrong dates and misspelt proper names there are a round score, among which shines forth pre-eminent the substitution of "Barker" for "Baldur." These, however, are as nothing to such assertions as that the music of the *Holländer* diminishes in strength "from the first to the last Act" (what about the almost unequalled beauties of the "duet" in Act II?) and that the music of *Parsifal* must have been built up on the "*Art de la Fugue*" of J. S. Bach! After such statements, one is quite prepared to hear that there are end-rhymes in the *Ring* and a host of metaphors and similes in *Lohengrin*. All this, too, from a man who has a sincere admiration, in his own way, for the works of Wagner. But the whole matter is explained in the bombastic post-scriptum,—the writer is apparently an egoist, who thinks more of trotting out his own bits of learning than of studying the master of whom he treats.

The other work to which I would briefly allude, is called "*Trois Moments de la Pensée de Richard Wagner*," by Mons. (l'Abbé) Marcel Hébert, professor of Philosophy at the École Fénelon, Paris. This brochure, of 70 pages, appeared last month; the titles of two earlier works by the same author, "*L'idée de Dieu dans Voltaire et dans Renan*," and "*Platon et Darwin*," will give a good notion of the spirit in which Mons. Hébert has treated his subject. In it the ecclesiastic is apparent, though not obtrusive. The three moments are classed as "1, Naturalism, the *Tetralogy*; 2, Pessimism, *Tristan and Isolde*; 3, Religious faith, *Parsifal*."

With certain reservations, these are excellent categories to have chosen, and the respective subjects are dealt-with in a way to attract anyone who is not above, or below, a little applied philosophy. One quotation (from page 49) must serve me as a summary of the book: "The evolution of Wagner's thought—like all true evolution—might be symbolised, not by a circle where the line returns upon itself in one and the same plane, but by a spiral: the line comes back to a similar point, yet at a higher and higher elevation."

In conclusion, while we English have not disgraced ourselves by the publication, and extensive purchase, of a book of Wagner caricatures—some of which would have been suppressed by *our* police—on the other hand we have nothing to show, as yet, that can be compared either for depth or interest, with the Wagner literature which is once more proving the superior intelligence of the French reading public.

RECENT WAGNER-LITERATURE: AMERICAN.

I must now turn from the Channel to the Atlantic. Here there is only one novelty to mention; for Mr. Krehbiel's admirable "*Studies in the Wagnerian Drama*" I reviewed in No. XIX of this journal, and Mr. Kobbé's biography is scarcely of serious importance. Therefore I may devote my whole attention to a work which has already caused a considerable stir among the critics.

Of Mr H. T. Finck's "*Wagner and his Works*" (H. Grevel & Co, London, 2 vols., 21s.) I said in the last issue of *The Meister* that I could "strongly recommend it to the Wagnerian beginner." As space was then too scanty for a longer notice, I must now explain that remark.—The "Wagnerian beginner" I take to be a person who has heard a few of Wagner's earlier works, on the stage, and a certain number of later excerpts at concerts. He has also heard a good deal of abuse showered upon the Bayreuth

master's life and methods, and he wishes for a pleasant and well-informed companion to chat the matter over with him, without bewildering him by going to work too deeply; he would like a general outline of Wagner's life, a more detailed picture or two of some of the salient incidents in it, a sketch of his character from not too psychological a point of view, an easy explanation of the reform he introduced into operatic makings and doings, and—well, yes!—a dash of abuse of the other side: in fact, something more or less journalistic. All these qualifications he will find possessed by Mr. Finck's book; and in their way, except for the two last-named, they are wholesome and proper things whereon to feed the budding curiosity of the new disciple. Nay, I will go a step farther, and say that many an older hand may profit by the biographical and musical aspects of Mr. Finck's exposition; for very few of us have troubled to read those letters to Liszt, Uhlig, Heine and Fischer upon which the biographer has so largely drawn.—On the other hand, the more advanced student of Wagnerian art, the man who has been a few times to Bayreuth and has read a fair share of the literature (French and German) of the subject, will find hardly a single fresh fact in this book, and will be greatly disappointed with its author's occasional attempts at philosophical reflection. Wagnerians of this class being in the minority, however, Mr. Finck was wise in his generation, when he elected to serve the million.

It becomes a different matter when one regards this book as the only attempt yet made, in the English language, to write a life of Richard Wagner on the larger scale. The "thousand pages" which Mr. Finck required for "adequate treatment" should, in all conscience, have erected a *monument* to the name of Wagner, a work of lasting critical worth, a work upon which its author might ten years hence look back with pride, as the offering of a devotion which leaves no room for self. Such a work the French will ere long possess, when Mons. Noufflard has completed his labours, and such a work the Germans already possess in Herr Glasenapp's classic. It is for this reason that I strongly object to the tone

adopted by Mr. Finck, in his preface, toward most of his predecessors. I make him a present of Jullien; but surely a man whose name has become a part and parcel of the life-history of Wagner deserves less-stinted praise than the following: "Glaserapp, having been the first in the field, had to do some hard pioneer work, for which he deserves credit. But his treatise exists only in German, and it will probably never be translated, [don't be *too* sure!] as it is too verbose, and contains too many dry details of merely local interest." This, of a man who astounded Wagner, himself, by his researches up hill and down dale for facts and valuable documents, at a time when Oesterlein's Wagner-Museum was not dreamt of, and before Mr. Finck had even commenced his own "seventeen years" "collection of Wagneriana." Those were days when to lift a hand in favour of Richard Wagner, even in Germany, was to be hooted by almost the entire press; therefore Herr Glaserapp must be more than pardoned if he "says little about" Wagner's personal character, except on its most attractive side. But, as for Glaserapp's style, it is one of the purest and most lucid to be found in German literature; while as for "the merely local interest," I should have thought that to give a series of graphic and careful pictures of Wagner's surroundings, was of infinitely more value than to load one's volumes with hostile criticisms that had better return to the waste-heaps whence they were raked. No, I am afraid that "collection of Wagneriana" has been a pitfall in Mr. Finck's path; it is intelligible enough, that he should have taken a half-mischievous pleasure in amassing these tokens of the enemy's folly for exhibition to his friends, and they would even have figured appropriately in the columns of a periodical; but to enshrine them for the benefit of posterity imperils the durability of the shrine itself, and Mr. Finck would do well to reject (in a second edition) all but two or three choice specimens, lest they corrode it clean away.

These "critical Philistines and prophets" take up fifty pages specially reserved for their accommodation, to say nothing of their being dotted, at random, all over the book.—Beyond the excision

of these fifty pages, I should recommend Mr. Finck to sacrifice sixty-six which he has devoted to the "stories" of Wagner's dramas; he would thus save almost one-eighth of his space, which he then might devote to the history of "Wagnerism in America," a section of his book which—so I learn—has been docked of about a hundred pages. Surely it may be taken for granted, that every one who is sufficiently interested in Wagner to sit down to the reading of a thousand pages about him, will at least know the general outlines of his plots. Moreover, these "stories" are the very weakest side of Mr. Finck's book; they are treated in a manner which he appears to have meant for lightness, but which degenerates at times into flippancy, even where he professes—and evidently feels—the sincerest admiration. What, for instance, is one to say to *this* (in the account of *Tristan und Isolde*): "All that her mother had been able to do for her was to give her a golden casket with magic vials" &c.? or worse still (in *Lohengrin*) "'It is so sweet to hear you say *Elsa*; shall I not also have the pleasure of hearing the sound of *your* name?'" From a Wagner-admirer, such writing takes one's breath away. Yet Mr. Finck's more serious descriptions are sometimes almost equally repelling; such as "the sensuous Titianesque coloring for this amorous duo," and—comparing a *Tannhäuser* theme with the "*Tristan* style"—"a psychologic significance, based on amorous affinity." This adjective "amorous" is a very favourite one with the author, occasionally relieved with "voluptuous" and "enraving." So far, it is a question of taste; but when one comes to "versified rot" (i, 108) "infernal row" (ii, 86), "Telramund is floored" (i, 242) and "'Nuff said" (i, 283)—to select a few out of many such expressions—I think that bad taste has passed over into mere slang for slang's sake. Nor is the large dose of cheap irony, in this book, of much higher value,—not to mention the breach of manners in invariably referring to Madame Wagner as "Cosima"!

Touching on Wagner from the philosophic side, one reads that "the key-note of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is Schopenhauer's sublime thought that Love is the highest of all moral and

hygienic laws, because it provides for the welfare of the next generation," and one is not surprised thereafter to find Wagner's "endeavors to explain the phenomena of musical inspiration," in the *Beethoven* essay, characterised as "nebulous stuff" (ii, 250), nor to discover that Mr Finck considers "the least important of these three sections [of *Oper und Drama*] is the second," while he devotes six pages to an account of the *easy* first section and none at all—in any connected manner—to the rest of that work. It would do him no harm to read the '68 Preface, in which Wagner says: "Of an actual consideration of the Second Part, devoted to the Drama, no sign had reached me: obviously my book had fallen only into the hands of professional Musicians." But indeed, Mr Finck is singularly unfortunate in his selection of Wagner's prose-writings, for a hurried line of disparagement, and he here lays himself open to the very charges he brings against the hostile critics of Wagner's music.

Taking the book as a whole, it is remarkably free from errors of fact, date, or name, though one would have expected the author to detect the occurrence, twice on one page (i, 246), of "Montserratt" for "Monsalvat," and to have verified for himself Tappert's statement—which he twice endorses—that "there is only one single alliterative line" in all *Parsifal*: on page 17 of the text-book, alone, he will find three perfect, and one or two imperfect Stabreims. In his musical criticisms Mr Finck is at his best—as one would have expected—and they form a really valuable contribution to the literature of the subject; but even here he allows his passion for extremes to carry him away, at times. To nothing else can I attribute his remark (ii, 337), anent "the famous love-song of Siegmund" in the *Walküre*: "I confess to a positive dislike for this brief love-song, which seems to me a cheap tune," adding that "its chopped-up, four-bar rhythm contrasts painfully with the flowing, continuous, uncadenced melody of the rest of the score." This is out-Heroding Herod, with a vengeance, and is one of those comments which make so many people say we Wagnerites have no ear for a tune.

I am afraid that I have dealt this book more blame than praise; but indeed there are many excellences in it, such as the chapter on "Welding the Nibelung's Ring," and the exposure of Hanslick's methods (i, 340-2). In Dr Hanslick the author had a foeman worthy of his steel; would that he had not wasted so much time and space upon the pigmies!

WILLIAM ASHTON ELLIS.

NOTES.

The number of pages in this and the preceding issue of *The Meister* has been somewhat reduced, in order to balance the increased size of No. 22, our funds not at present permitting any extravagance. But the ordinary number of pages, namely 32, will be resumed in the issues for next year.

* * *

The dates of performances at the Bayreuth Festspiele for 1894 will be as follows,—*Parsifal*, July 19, 23, 26, 29, August 2, 5, 9, 15 and 19; *Lohengrin*, July 20, 27, August 3, 10, 12 and 16; *Tannhäuser*, July 22, 30, August 6, 13 and 18. The price of seats will be 20s. each, as before, and early application should be made, for Messrs Chappell & Co. were receiving many inquiries as early as last June.

* * *

From the *Bayreuther Taschen-Kalender* we see that the number of performances of Wagner's works in the German language amounted to 1047, for the year ended June 30, 1893, shewing an increase of 227 beyond those of the previous twelvemonth; moreover the representations of *Rheingold*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* had nearly doubled in that

period; to these figures must be added a large number of performances in French and Italian. This useful little book has now reached its tenth issue, and contains more interesting matter than many far more pretentious efforts. In the present *Kalender* will be found, *inter alia*, two or three articles on *Lohengrin*, a facsimile of the original programme (Aug. 28, '50), and two contributions by Dr Hugo Dinger, the one entitled "Wagner's attitude towards Religion," the other "Wagner-research and the Wagner-Museum." Dr Dinger shows a much wider grasp of his subject than heretofore, and appears to be rapidly coming to the front. (The *Kalender*, 2s., may be obtained of our Hon. Treas.)

* * *

For the benefit of *Musical News*, which seems to cherish most heterodox views about the "Philistine," we may point to the last few pages of *Opera and Drama*; also to Matthew Arnold's definition, in the preface to his *Study of Celtic Literature*: "On the side of beauty and taste, vulgarity; on the side of morals and feeling, coarseness; on the side of mind and spirit, unintelligence, — this is Philistinism."

